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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001556

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: NCP CONTINUES CHARM OFFENSIVE

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The NCP is willing to negotiate directly with key rebels in advance of peace talks in Doha, expects that UN/AU Chief Mediator Bassole will direct the talks, and will sweeten the pot by releasing some Darfuri prisoners, but is not quite ready to release the JEM rebels who attacked the capital, NCP negotiator Yehia Bebiker told CDA Fernandez and polchief October 20. Bebiker was extremely positive about the talks in Kenana, expressing his belief that they had created a "positive environment" that would allow for further movement on negotiations to resolve the Darfur crisis. Bebiker also shared information about the "Abyei Unity Fund" and said he expected that in the future Sudan will have more states rather than fewer, with a federal system of government and regional authorities playing a greater role. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) As the newly-appointed head of the secretariat of the Abyei Unity Fund, Bebiker spoke at length about his vision for the fund. In implementing projects in Abyei to comply with the Abyei Roadmap and the Abyei Protocol, Bebiker said the NCP is willing to contribute to existing development organizations in the Three Areas such as UNICEF in order to avoid creating new administrative structures. Based on the June 8 Abyei Road Map agreement between the NCP and SPLM, Bebiker has been placed in charge of the day to day running of the "Abyei Unity Fund" that will receive and allocate money set aside for the Abyei region per the CPA Abyei Protocol and the Abyei Roadmap. FVP Salva Kiir and VP Ali Osman Taha are formally in charge of the fund, and there will be six members of the board of directors (three each from the SPLM and NCP) with Bebiker in charge of the Secretariat of the fund. Bebiker said the money is currently being set aside but has not yet been allocated to projects, which will be identified soon in consultation with the Abyei Interim Administration. CDA urged Bebiker not to duplicate what has already been put in place by donors and the UN, to which Bebiker replied that he intended to allocate money to community development projects including those currently administered by UNICEF. Bebiker said his goal is to avoid duplication and ensure that no "additional and unnecessary" administrative structures are created. Bebiker said he would be working with the Interim Administration and local governments on the identification of projects, but gave the impression that he and the Board of Directors would have final decision-making authority on allocation of funds for the fund. Bebiker said that the money intended for the Misseriya and Dinka communities (separate from and in addition to the Abyei Unity Fund) would be allocated to the South Kordofan state government and Abyei Interim Administration, respectively.

13. (SBU) CDA asked Bebiker for his opinion on the creation of additional states in places such as Southern Kordofan, given the special interests of the Misseriya and the Nuba communities, and given current discussions at the Sudan People's Initiative about the possible creation of a Darfur region. Bebiker replied that he thought the discussion of tribalism and native administration at the SPI was somewhat exaggerated - in his opinion the native administration has become less relevant as more Sudanese move to towns and become integrated in general Sudanese society. Moreover, based on his experience negotiating the CPA, he predicted the future would bring more states rather than fewer with an expanded role for regional authorities. He pointed to the example of the Fur demand for a fourth state in the center of Darfur that would be primarily comprised of Fur. He did not rule out a fifth state in the north to protect the interests of the Zaghawa. Regarding the creation of one Darfur region exerting authority over the Darfur states, he said the structure for this was already in place with the creation of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority envisioned in the DPA. CDA pointed out that this had not been funded nor empowered, which Bebiker did not dispute, but merely replied that the concept for the administrative structure already exists. In terms of the general trend of states in Sudan, Bebiker said he expected there would be continued growth in the number of states. Bebiker recalled that at the CPA talks in Naivasha, the SPLM had originally pushed for one unified southern region, but eventually opted for the ten southern states.

14. (C) Babiker praised the positive spirit that was coming out of the Sudan Peoples' Initiative (SPI) talks held in

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Kenana. CDA agree that the spirit of Kenana was good but was not sufficient. He noted that the Darfuri rebels were bound to be deeply suspicious of the regime and of what they saw as a long litany of broken agreements. There was a need for tangible concessions up front. Babiker responded that negotiations would lead to concessions, not the other way around but that the regime was amenable to considering releasing some "political prisoners" swept up in the wake of the May 10 JEM attack on Omdurman, although it is not yet willing to consider releasing JEM fighters who have been sentenced to death for their participation. He agreed that UN/AU Chief Mediator Bassole must play a key role in any Darfur negotiating strategy in the coming months.

15. (C) Comment: Bebiker and the rest of the NCP appear determined to give the impression that they are moving forward on all fronts (Darfur and CPA) and prove to the international community that they have the will and the determination to resolve Sudan's ills. This is a common (and often effective, at least in the short term) strategy by the regime. Their engagement with the SPLM and some opposition figures on the Sudan People's Initiative is a small but positive step forward for the regime, but it remains a vague, belated decision that was taken only in response to the looming ICC indictment. This behavior proves that the regime will begin to act to address problems when placed under significant pressure, both external and internal. However, if there is nothing delivered by the international community in return, and President Bashir is indicted, there is likely to be considerable regime disappointment and a possible backlash, though it is not yet clear whether an indictment would herald a change in course or merely a review of its posture and options. We continue to believe the latter is more likely but the NCP apparatus itself appears not to have fully addressed its options as it maneuvers to avoid a political quandary entirely of its own making.
FERNANDEZ